



Assessing the Outcomes:

Perkins Accountability Requirements for the Local Education Agency

A summary of federal
accountability requirements of
the Carl D. Perkins Vocational
and Technical Education
Amendments of 1998

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THE ACCOUNTABILITY CHALLENGE

Accountability is one of the hallmarks of the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Amendments of 1998. The new legislation directs state and local education agencies to annually assess the attainment of students participating in vocational instruction. Data are intended for federal accountability purposes, as well as for use by state and local agencies in improving student and program performances.

To support agencies in meeting new federal reporting requirements, the Division of Vocational-Technical Education (DVTE), U.S. Department of Education, has partnered with state administrators and other stakeholders to design an accountability system for vocational education. In developing this system, DVTE has aimed to create a set of objective, methodologically sound criteria that can guide accountability system development and promote continuous improvement efforts at the national, state, and school levels.

This work, which builds upon states' existing measurement systems, reflects DVTE's continuing commitment to working with states to improve the quality and usefulness of information collected for policy-making purposes while reducing the burden of data collection on state and local agencies.

Successfully meeting the responsibilities laid out by Congress depends upon committing ourselves at all levels—local, state, and national—to working collaboratively to identify challenges to data collection and to find workable solutions we can all support. Accordingly, DVTE has developed this booklet to assist local educators in understanding federal reporting requirements and the importance of local data to the overall accountability effort.

OVERVIEW OF THE PERKINS LEGISLATION

The 1998 Perkins Act calls for a significant federal and state commitment to performance measurement and accountability. Under the new legislation, states are required to document their progress toward improving the educational outcomes of students participating in vocational instruction and to develop performance management systems that promote continuous program improvement.

State and local performance data are collected on four core indicators of student performance, which include attainment of academic and technical skills; school completion; placement into postsecondary education or advanced training, employment, or the military; and participation and completion leading to nontraditional employment.

States negotiate with DVTE to set performance goals and annual performance targets for each indicator. Those meeting or exceeding their performance targets are eligible for incentive money, while those falling short are expected to develop program improvement plans to avoid federal sanction, which in some cases may entail loss of some or all of their federal resources.

Local agencies are also held accountable for student performances. Those that do not make substantial progress toward meeting state negotiated performance levels are required to conduct a local needs assessment and to develop an improvement plan to address state-identified inadequacies.

Accountability data reported to the U.S. Department of Education are used to draft a report to Congress, which profiles the success of the vocational enterprise. Since the availability and level of federal funding is often conditioned on program performance, the collection of accurate state data is critical to continued federal support for vocational education.

THE LOCAL ROLE IN PERKINS ACCOUNTABILITY

Responding to Perkins III reporting requirements has led many states to redesign their vocational data collection systems. This has often resulted in vocational administrators at the district and school levels being asked to change their reporting procedures or gather new information not previously requested.

While DVTE recognizes that revised federal reporting guidelines have caused some inconvenience, collection of accountability data is crucial to continued federal support for vocational education. Moreover, career and technical education has a responsibility to demonstrate to students, educators, and the public what is accomplished through their substantial investment of time and other resources.

Ultimately, the success of the Perkins accountability system hinges on the collaboration of district and school administrators in the data collection process. This commitment must extend beyond merely reporting statistics without regard to their accuracy or completeness—justifying the effort and expense of data collection will require that we **use** the data for both accountability and continuous improvement purposes. For this to occur, the data must be **useable**.

Federal and state government staff have collaborated to design an accountability system that meets national reporting needs, yet takes into account state and local information needs and capacity to report. Now, as system implementation occurs, it will be up to local educators to determine its viability.

LOCAL DATA COLLECTION

Since state information systems rely upon locally collected data, the participation of district and school administrators is critical to the Perkins accountability process. The law requires states to report data on four core measures of performance—each of which has multiple subindicators—for a variety of student populations.

Measures

Each state must collect information on a total of 14 elements for secondary and postsecondary education:

—CORE MEASURE 1: ATTAINMENT—

Student attainment of challenging state-established

- secondary academic skill proficiencies
- secondary vocational and technical skill proficiencies
- postsecondary academic skill proficiencies
- postsecondary vocational and technical skill proficiencies

—CORE MEASURE 2: COMPLETION—

Student attainment of a

- high school diploma or its recognized equivalent
- proficiency credential along with a secondary diploma
- postsecondary degree or credential

—CORE MEASURE 3: PLACEMENT AND RETENTION—

Placement in

- secondary placement into postsecondary education or advanced training; employment; or the military
- postsecondary placement into postsecondary education or advanced training; employment; or the military

Postsecondary retention in

- education or advanced training; employment; or the military

—CORE MEASURE 4: NONTRADITIONAL—

- participation in secondary nontraditional programs
- completion of secondary nontraditional programs
- participation in postsecondary nontraditional programs
- completion of postsecondary nontraditional programs

Some states have also developed additional measures or require local educators to report information that is intended solely for state purposes. While states have ultimate discretion in identifying the types of data that local agencies must submit, federal reporting requirements are limited to the measures specified above.

Vocational Student Populations

Perkins requires that states report information on students who participate in any vocational coursework and those who complete a state-identified threshold level of vocational education, typically defined as a sequence of courses within a vocational program area.

Accordingly, local educators should expect to report on the following populations:

- ➔ *Vocational Participant*—Student who enrolled in at least one vocational-technical education course
- ➔ *Vocational Concentrator*—Student who enrolled in a threshold level of vocational education
- ➔ *Vocational Completer*—Student who attained the academic and technical knowledge/skills/proficiencies within a program/sequence of courses or instructional units that provides an individual with the academic and technical knowledge/skills/proficiencies to prepare for employment and or further advanced education

In some instances, states may specify different populations or may set additional requirements, such as completion of schooling, in order for students to be included in a measure.

To ensure that all students make progress in vocational education, Congress also requires that each state monitor performance outcomes, controlling for student demographics and special population status. These individuals are described in terms of:

Gender _____	
Male	Female
Unknown	

Race-ethnicity _____	
American Indian or Alaskan Native	Native Hawaiian/ other Pacific Islander
Asian	White
Black or African American	Hispanic or Latino
Unknown/Other	

Special Population Status

Economically Disadvantaged	Displaced Homemakers
Limited English Proficient	Nontraditional
Disabled	Students with Other Barriers
Single Parents	

While classifying students based on demographics or special population status can impose some burden on district and school staff, Congress has specifically called for the collection of this data. This is in keeping with Congressional intent of improving the attainment of *all students* participating in vocational programs.

State vocational administrators have often developed their own definitions to assist district and school staff in classifying students into special population categories.

Data Quality

The accuracy of locally collected data is crucial to the continued development of the Perkins accountability system. To assist local agencies in improving the quality of data, DVTE has collaborated with state and stakeholder representatives to develop objective criteria that vocational administrators can use to critique their measurement strategies. Understanding the importance of data quality requires that local educators be familiar with a number of terms. These include:

- ➔ *Validity*—the degree to which a performance measurement approach directly measures the student outcome for which it was intended.
- ➔ *Reliability*—the degree to which performance measurement is conducted in a consistent manner using standardized or consistent data collection instruments (e.g., student surveys, assessments).

- *Student Coverage*—the extent to which eligible students are included within a measure. Coverage is appropriate if outcomes are obtained for all or nearly all students eligible for inclusion in a given measure.
- *Timing*—when data for a given measure are obtained. Timing of a measurement is appropriate when collection of information occurs within a time interval specified by the state for a given measure, and all data are collected at the same time across years.
- *Unduplicated Count*—a mutually exclusive count of the individuals who achieve a desired outcome. Unduplicated counts result in an individual only being counted once for a given measure.
- *Duplicated Count*—the sum of individuals who achieve a desired outcome that may result in a person being counted more than once (e.g., a student who participates in two vocational programs).

FEDERAL TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE MATERIALS

To assist states in developing their vocational accountability systems, DVTE has collaborated with state representatives, the U.S. Department of Labor, and key stakeholder groups to design a number of products. These materials provide guidelines and recommendations to support states in meeting federal accountability requirements, as well as in making continuous program improvement. They include:

- *Perkins III Accountability Primer*—Summarizes the accountability components of Perkins to familiarize state and program staff with new federal reporting requirements.
- *Core Indicator Framework*—Reviews the purposes and construction of each core measure, and specifies preferred measurement approaches and collection strategies that can be easily integrated into state and local performance management systems to support continuous improvement.
- *Quality Criteria and Scoring Rubrics*—Presents criteria and a rating system to assist state and local agencies in assessing the accuracy of their data collection approaches, in order to ensure sufficient rigor and comparability of state performance measurement and reporting.
- *Peer Evaluation Resource Guide*—Provides resource materials and background information to assist state teams in using the Quality Criteria and Scoring Rubrics to critically evaluate their measures, measurement approaches, and the overall quality of their state data.

State and local representatives are encouraged to familiarize themselves with these documents to gain a better understanding of Perkins reporting requirements.

These documents can be found, along with other federally developed program memorandum and policy briefs, on the *DVTE Data Quality Peer Collaborative Network* website:

<http://www.edcountability.net/>

Contact the office of your State Director of Vocational Education to obtain a Username and Password to enable you to take advantage of the full features of this site.

RESOURCES

National Association of State Directors of Vocational Technical Education Consortium

The Hall of States
444 North Capitol Street, NW, Suite 830
Washington, DC 20001
Telephone: (202) 737-0303
Fax: (202) 737-1106
<http://www.nasdvtec.org/>

U.S. Department of Education
Office of Vocational and Adult Education
Division of Vocational-Technical Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW, 4090 MES
Washington, DC 20202
Phone: (202) 205-5451
Fax: (202) 205-8748
<http://www.ed.gov/offices/OVAE/index.html>

Career Clusters
1500 W. Seventh Ave.
Stillwater, OK 74074
Phone: 1-866-4FUTURE (1-866-438-8873)
<http://www.careerclusters.org/>

National Alliance for Partnerships in Equity, Inc.
P.O. Box 369
172 Hood Road
Cochranville, PA 19330
Phone: (610) 345-9246
Fax: (610) 869-4380
<http://www.napequity.org/>